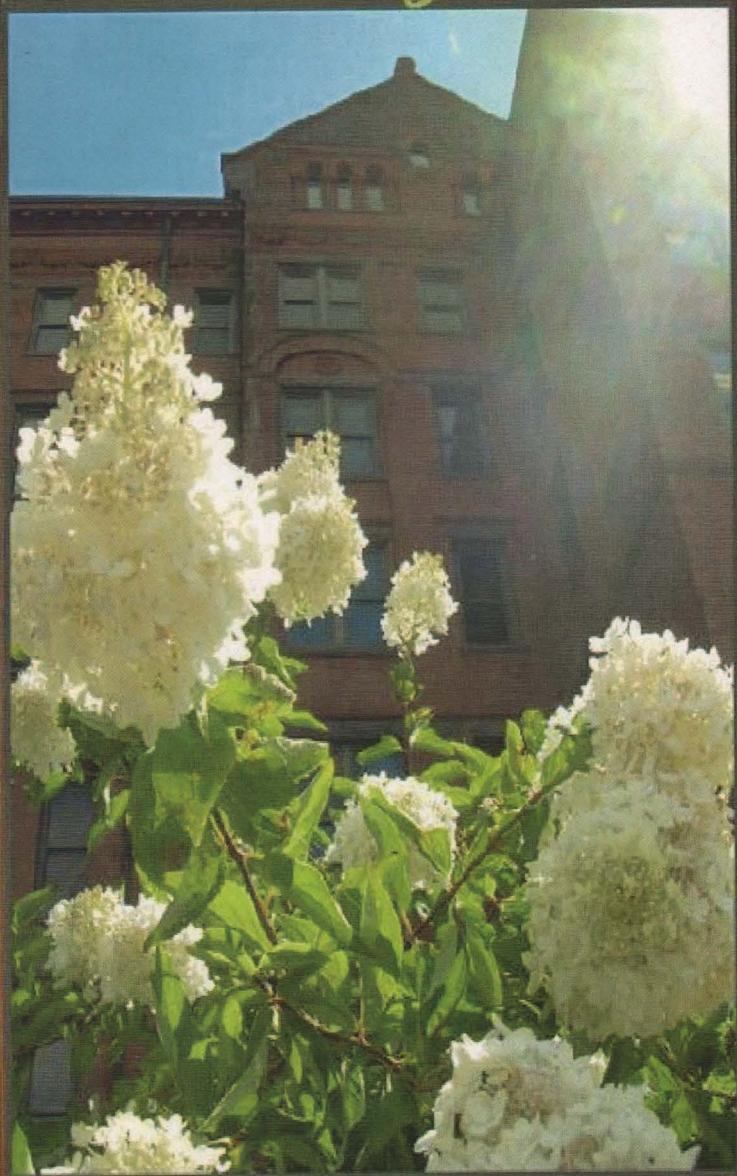


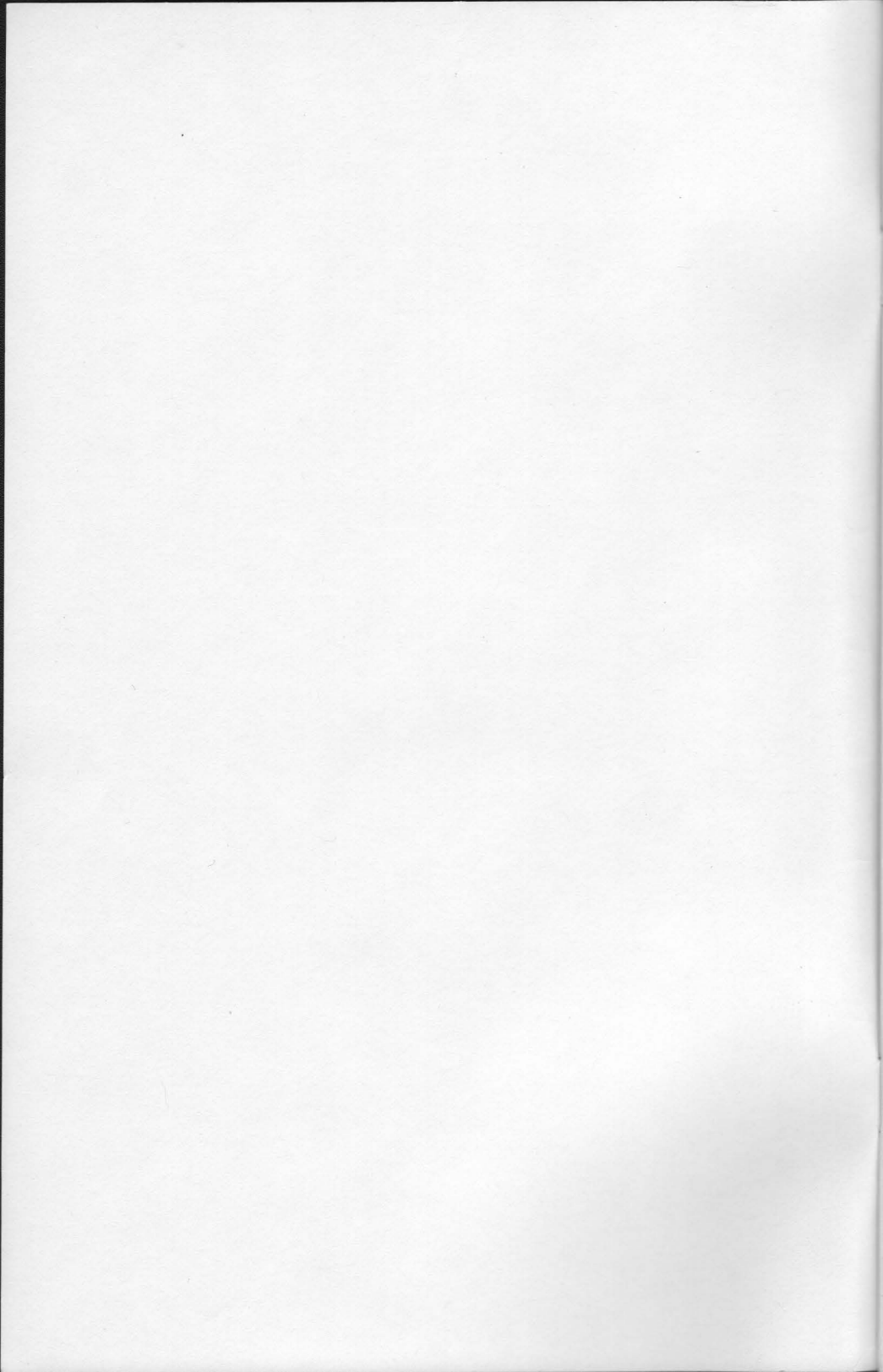
SLAM

PRESENTS:

Edge City



2008



the **S**ociety of **L**iterature **A**t **M**ansfield

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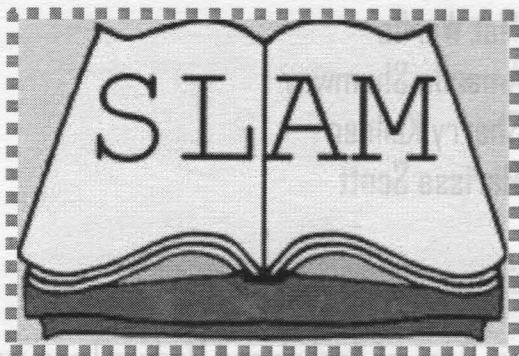
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Edge City is published annually by the Society of Literature At Mansfield. It is Mansfield University's student literary journal, featuring poetry, fiction, and creative non-fiction written by MU students. All MU students are welcome to submit their creative work to *Edge City*. Submissions are accepted in the Fall and the Early Spring. They are then reviewed blindly by the editorial board. For more information about *Edge City* or SLAM, please contact Andrea Harris at X4591 or Louise Sullivan-Blum at X4597.

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Watch Out

By: Alicia Shumway

Frustration looms.
Tension heightens.
A clenched fist.
A tightened jaw.

Pressure of life is overwhelming.
So much to do,
Accomplish,
Succeed,
Complete,
Beyond normal standards.

Stand tall.
Eyes forward.
Shoulders back-
Don't dare to slump.
Walk with pride.
Exult pride.
Live with pride.
Be proud.

Never fail.
Continue to improve.
Always moving forward.
Never look back.
Don't show weakness.
It waits for you.

Mom and Dad
By: Emily Russell

I wonder what
You would think of
Me

If you knew
The person I
Have become.

I am not
The little girl
Who played
With pee-pee dollies and
That you dressed in
Ruffles and bows.

I am
A woman
Who exposes
Her breasts when I have
Drank too
Much (yes, I drink.

I attend parties.
Whenever
There is one,
Wherever
It is,
I am there.

I don't drink for the
Flavor though,
I drink for the
Feeling,
The results,
To be drunk).

What would you
Think of me
If you
Could see me
Drunk off my
Ass (yes, I swear.

I like to cuss.
There is a
Freedom in
Expressing myself
With bad,
Swear words.

I don't swear
Because I think
It makes me
Look cool
Or fit in
better).

I question if you

Mom and Dad
Would disown me.. if
You knew that I had
Friends who smoke
Pot (no, I have not
Tried it.

I have close friends
Who have been on
Probation, and who
Have been in jail for
Possession, paraphernalia,
And intent to smoke weed.

I have been outside
Where it was
Smoked and inside
A room. I even got a
Contact high,
(Once).

Would you
Really
Love me
Less
If you knew about my
Life?

Mine Eyes

By: Corey Tarreto

Why do you defy me
daily,

revealing pain and hope and sadness
despite the stone cold of my face.

Jade-d truths
of my every thought
shine through you,
betraying my hard work
building up walls.

You open your gates
and my thoughts flow out,
flooding on-lookers
with judgments and questions.

You Judases,
selling my soul
for a few gold flecks.

Darting, rolling,
shining without my consent.

Please, restrain yourselves
when I am forced to entertain
immaturities, or confront authorities,
or when I enter a room
to find him waiting for me.

Control your tempers,
take my heart off your sleeve,
let me do the talking
from now on.

Readings in Environmental Literature

Nature Writing Assignment

By: Wesley K. Gromley

I lay there in bed. I am surrounded by blue cinder blocks on four sides. Above me are twenty-three tiles and a light. Below me is the floor. Twenty-six of these confinements make a floor, six floors make a side, and two sides make Cedarcrest Manor. My eyes follow the mortar lines between the cinder up the wall to the ceiling as the second hand ticks away time on a small clock on the desk. The only thing in my peripheral vision that was not created by society for the benefit of man was a metal collar hanging from a rack. For its reflection of the wild, it is the liveliest item in the room. What memories it stirs. It belonged to the family farm dog, a black lab dubbed Mickey. Often I would free him of the collar, so that he would feel that much more free. He was a fine and spirited dog. Tears flooded my eyes and I wept hard when he passed. This emotion felt rather unnatural. After all, where I come from, men do not cry. It is February. Fatigue, brought on by my immediate surroundings, sets in. I have had enough of this place that civilization has provided for me.

Friday comes, and I decide to retire back to the farm for the weekend. Time seems to relax as do I. I sit at the kitchen table and reflect over cookies. This past year has been the first deer season I have missed since I have been able to hunt. Come to think of it, I have not been up to the woods since August. I am long overdue. I figure I will take the new dog, a black lab that my mother named "Buddy" for a walk tomorrow. He is only a few months old and does not have that much worldly experience yet. It would have been his first time seeing the woods.

Saturday came, and I found myself running errands all morning. When I returned, I took Buddy outside to make his rounds around the yard just a little after lunch time. He did not fancy the snow. It was cold up in between his webbed feet, and he was soon ready to go inside. "What a wuss," I think, but then again puppies are allowed to be. Despite the situation, I decide to go for the walk anyway. It will be relieving to be in a non-synthetic environment, where nature is the prominent feature. I can let go of all of the worries bestowed onto me by "real life" and be "simple" for a while.

I put on my heavy flannel work jacket over a light flannel I am already wearing, tie up the boots, and head out the door. I walk up the cold lane with my hands in pocket, breath visible, and electric fences on both sides. My sauntering brings me to the main road. I look both ways, as if something would actually be coming, then cross into the field onto the tractor path. The snow has been laying for a few days, and has iced over on the surface. With each step there is a delay and a crash as I smash through the snow. There is no being quit today. I trudge at the edge of the field. The field itself slopes upwards to my left and I have trees to my right. All of the loose snow from the past days have drifted onto my desired walkway, and gets deeper as I go. A blanket of snow covers the field, which is dotted evenly with stubbles of last year's corn crop. Finally, the hill became so steep that no one dare try cultivating it, and thus gave way to brush and tree growth. The tractor path made a nice hollow through these woods.

A briar thicket was the first growth of brush on the left side. When I reach it, I see rabbit tracks. Their light footprints follow each other aimlessly out of the briars, and then back in again. They have no problem staying on top of this snow, save one big one that made its depressions as it moved. I go a little further,

and the briars come alive. I stop, and three rabbits can be seen scurrying about under closer inspection. Then, they stop and freeze every muscle, as if I cannot see them. I start lumbering on again, and the rabbits take off. A short distance up the path the briars stop and the trees start. The snow is not as deep through here, hats off to the plant world. Off to the left is a tree no more than 2 inches in diameter with a scar. Imbedded in this tree under the scar is the broad razor head of an arrow. This particular tree, I happen to know, spared the life of a dear one archery season. It would have been my first buck, and the missing of it post-poned my coming into manhood.

The tractor path turned, and opened up into the bottom of a wide depression in the landscape with fields on both sides. Directly off of the path, to the left, once lay a magnificent pile of downed trees gathered from around the farm. For many years, this had been the place where my father and brother would come to gather wood to heat our house. This pile was eventually reduced to brush and stumps, and is now best used as a deer blind.

The sky is dismal. The only sounds are the wind rustling though the tree twigs, and my obnoxious footsteps through the snow. When I was younger I was taught how to walk quietly when out hunting. This was to preserve the natural sound of the environment. There is no stopping the bombarding sound of my feet today. How out of place I feel.

I move onward past the pile of brush. Up against the gray sky soars a redtail hawk, searching for a bite. In front of me I see the end of the depression, where both a hill and the woods start. The tractor path continues up through it, as a squirrel bounds across. I walk the path to the top where it stops, and opens into a field. I

make a left and chart along the backside of the woods for a noisy twenty paces. I reach my destination and stop. Silence. There is nothing but the natural sound of air moving through the branches which I turn and face. There are two trees on the edge well known to me, and between them a plot of dirt now covered with briars and snow. Below this surface, lay a blanket. Inside the blanket rests the bones of a good friend. Tears flood my eyes and I wept hard at his memory. It is Mickey's bones. I pull my hands out of my jacket to rid the tears condensing on my eyelashes. It was these hands that received Mickey when I arrived home, these hand, that tried to help him while he was sick, these hands that held him as he let go life's last breath, and it was these hands that interred him into this earth. The sound of my sobbing disrupts the serenity of the setting. Is this sound not natural? It seems to fit in. It is as natural as the rabbits whisking through the briars, the redtail beating its wings, or the wind's rush through the branches. I need not pay any mind to the expectations of society as I become enveloped in the harmony of the surrounding environment. The time feels just right as well, as the surroundings seem to be giving me their attention in this allotted time frame for remembrance. When I am done, I leave more peacefully than I came, stepping softly in the tracks I have already made.

On my way back, I ponder what has just happened. I was in a stable state of mind the whole walk up, but when I reached Mickey's grave, I broke down. Society has its own code of conduct, as does nature. What is not acceptable to one may contradict what is acceptable in the other. This paradox between society and nature allows one to relieve his or her natural urges in a place where it is accepted. Although society has set for me what it means to be a man, nature provides an escape that allows for the true expressions.

Dandelion

By: Ashley Valentine

While in a flower garden bright
That's flooded by the sun
There's no place for you in the light
When you're just a dandelion

Nobody wants a dandelion
In a bouquet or on a stone
In such a lovely world as this one
The weed is all alone

I'm a dandelion
Any beauty is outshone
But I'm a lucky one
I have a sun of my own

Your gentle rays surround me
They warm my skipping heart
From the flower's glares I'm freed
And seen as a work of art

Living On Carpet

By: Corey Tarreto

"Life isn't about the big
things," she says as I
lay back and smile
in wholehearted agreement
and bask on the Berber
pushing against the
hourly chimes outside, "It's
the sum of the little
things, the everyday
beauties—"

"These moments," I cut in.

"This is life."

We pause in awe that
as our brains in dream
states remove ourselves
from our forms to look down
on this present memory. And I
wonder too if it's rare
for twenty-somethings to
have such things figured
out. It feels rare,

and like rain outside. Thank
heaven, we need it
to burst. 'Cause the
air around us is thick
and we breathe it into
ourselves until
we're able to finally
exhale.
here, on her floor.

Porcelain Dolls

By: Emily Russell

Use of "Lord I Lift Your Name on High" Lyrics

by Donnie McClurkin

I

*A man,
with a plastic face,
stands behind a pulpit
speaking to all the porcelain dolls.*

The dolls all have painted smiles.
They use lace and silks to cover
the chips and cracks.
They all move in unison;
a chorus of voices raising chipped
arms up and singing:

"Lord I lift Your Name on High,
Lord I love to sing Your prais-es,
To sing Your prais-es
I'm so glad You're in my life,
I'm so glad You came to save us."

They aren't singing inside though;
Inside the hollow body

A chorus echoes:

"I need You more than ever
I need to know You care for me.

My heart is bleeding;

I can't clot it on my own.

I need Someone to sa-ave me."

They want to scream "I am dying!"

They are all so broken

but the cracks have been hidden

so well

for so long

that the world has forgotten they are there.

They jump up to leave,

Plaster on a fresh smile

and too eagerly wave goodbye.

All those dolls are itching

to crawl back into bed

and snuggle with a bottle of vodka

and pass the time until they have

cracked beyond repair.

II

Lord, repair me;

I can't do it on my own.

Drugs and alcohol are ineffective

to help repair me.

They just push the cracks,

Cause me to break open even more.

I roll over and crawl out of her bed.

Muffled clunk as her last empty bottle hits

My mother's precious,

Ex-precious,

white carpet.

I pull on a black dress to hide my chips

and sit at mothers, now my, vanity

to paint on a pleasant face.

III

They file into the pew,

Like sheep being led to slaughter,

All of the dolls have painted

on their smiles and covered

themselves with ridiculous lace.

The preacher tells of

her accomplishments,

her hobbies,

and her peaceful death.

I want to scream!

If anyone truly knew

her they would know

*She drank too much
And finally
took one too many pills.*

*Looking out
at all the porcelain dolls,
I wonder*

*Who,
is next?*

*He took the reins, unlocked the chains
They live in the night
Where the cat
Only notice the mouse
And he's
And who's
That digests him in the night*

*The wind keeps blowin' the door open
As though even it is desperately hopin'
That she'll break and make a run for it -
Even if it's just to cross the yard*

Twisted Thread

By: Katy Stewart

They live in a thirty foot trailer
Where the cats and the dogs and the kids
Only notice the scraps she throws out after dinner

He has a car and she has a kitchen
She loves God and he loves Wicken
And picken' on her

And he screams so hard at her
The houseplants committed suicide
And left her nothing real to care about

At night he'll be passed out sleeping
Her mind will be creeping 'round ideas of leaving
But she can't get past the fears he's presented to her like golden
calves
But he always laughs at her once he's said 'em

The wind keeps blowin' the door open
As though even it is desperately hopin'
That she'll break and make a run for it-
Even if it's just to cross the yard

A single twisted thread
Embedded 'round the leg of her psyche
Is what tethers her now

He's dropped the reigns, unlocked the chains
An ounce of strength
Would set her free and its ecstasy
For him to watch this willful imprisonment
And he's hopelessly addicted to his power
And this masochated horror
That digests him in the venus flytrap of his mind

He takes in this sustenance
This balance, his sin, his insulin
It keeps him alive, it makes her writhe
In the confines of
Two binded minds

Memo: After Receiving The Letter From My Ex

By: Mozart Guerrier

It arrived today.

Rubbing close against bills and too good to be true

credit card deals.

I see you're still holding company with thieves.

The wind keeps blowin' the door open
As though even it is desperately hopin'
That she'll break and make a run for it -
Even if it's just to cross the yard

What "It" Means to Me
Respect for Roseville

By: Corey Tarreto

I have respect for Roseville
and her 40 miles per hour
signs, not because I'm forced
to by the hairpins in Job's Corner
or by cops in Meshopen,
but because of the quaintness
of her singular throughway.
The pleasant request of the
yellow rose on the welcome sign
and the red flame of the Methodist
church coax me to coasting.

There are no flashy lights here.

The Pumpkinhill and Pig's Tail
intersections plead for caution.

And so, I obey
because she asked so nicely and because

I respect her straight forward

simplicity – something I wish

I had more of on these autumn

days when my boldness

is drying out with the air.

I need more of Rose's

gumption, more fortitude.

But how can I stand

firm when I'm always

just passing through?

What "It" Means to Me

By: Armen Henderson

It means that I will never fall short of anything less than excellence. It means that I shall learn from others mistakes so I will not fall victim to stereotype or circumstance. It means that even though it seems others were given a head start, I too have the potential to overcome. It means going above and beyond to reach normal standards. It means that the concept of standardized tests may be a little harder to grasp for me at first glance. It means that I am tan all year around minus the trips to the tanning salon or hours spent in the sun. It means that I am a special person, one who perseveres through pain trials and tribulation with a smile on my face. It means that my ancestors waded in the water so I never have to hide myself neck deep in shame ever again. It means that our voice will never be silenced and shall echo in time throughout history. It means that I'm riding with my beautiful black sisters until the end. It means that I do listen to rap, but by no means does that make me a follower of their every move. It means that I was destined to be successful and that since they couldn't stop Martin from dreaming, they

better not even think they are going stop me. It means that Africa is still beautifully home in spite of the genocide or AIDS epidemic. It means that if you are my brother or sister you can vouch for the struggle associated with skin pigmentation. It means that racism still whispers in the voice of America and that these days it's become louder than ever. It means that regardless of what Obama says...he has my vote. It means that the time for change is now but resistance is stronger than it's ever been. It means that the word Nigga will forever display the hatred for my people no matter its context. It means that we are blind to our own self hatred. It means that we are still psychologically enslaved as a people. It means that I am more than just a means of entertainment. It means that I am proud of being who I am 365 days a year and not just 28. It means that I am proud of being where I'm from but that doesn't define where I am going and it definitely doesn't mean I plan to go back. Being black means everything to me. What does it mean to you?

Sig Fig

By: Corey Tarreto

"And so the sum
of our routes is this?"
she says strumming her
fingers on the hood in
the cool morning mist.
A smile melts her face
because she knows
this mess is the best
story she'll ever tell.
And so her fingers rest.
Neither stirs as their
minds stew.
The mist is thinning,
the road is straight.
They can see for miles.

Promises

By: Mozart Guerrier

We all know that promises are

like Christmas wrapping.

Pretty on the outside.

but soon to be discarded.

But trust is pretty

in a ugly kind of way

like a dream

in a kinky collar

waiting to be loosened and given some

air.

Depression.

By: Alicia Shumway

Don't let it consume you.

Don't ever give in.

The immense pain,

building,

killing.

Spirit fly away.

Save yourself.

A battle.

A fight.

Fear consumes

your deepest secrets.

Cry your heart out,

you're trapped in Hell.

Don't give up.

Don't give in.

We all Mental exhaustion

overwhelms your soul.

Are you strong enough to fight?

It's your life.

Save yourself.

like a drunkard A

in a kinky edgier A

waiting to be loose some

your deepest secrets

cry your heart out

you're trapped in Hell

Dusk

By: Ashley Valentine

It was a normal summer day
the day the sky caught fire
but none had noticed the way
the blaze kept spreading higher
it was a fire in the sky
between the day and night
the moon was not yet high
and yet the sky was bright
cool stars soon appeared
who's kisses quenched the flame
and the fire finally cleared
and shrunk away in shame
the moon rose to its place
to protect the night-time land
with a soft glowing face
as time went on as planned

Past Life
By: Corey Tarreto

These nights I
feel a witch
my billowing dress
wrestles the wind,
my un-kept hair
tangles my eyes.

A slow deep
candle glow breathing,
rising on the warmth
of light floating on
the edge of flame.
I rustle the trees
I spin the earth
I glow the moon.

No wonder we were burned.

Ethel Grace

By: Amanda Shaub

There are times when I feel another presence in the room with me, sometimes an evil presence, sometimes a pleasant one. I have come to realize I get visits from my past. My name is Olivia, but it wasn't always. A century or so ago, I was Sarah, an orphan living with countless other orphaned children in a huge Victorian house. I had a sister then too, her name was Ethel Grace. We were both children abandoned by our parents for one reason or another and sent to live with a man who took it upon himself to beat the sin out of us. His name was Frank. I was a prime target for Frank since I was conceived in sin. I was either born out of wedlock or my mother was a prostitute, I can't tell. Either way, I was always under attack for my sinful ways. Frank would tie my hands together; forcing them into prayer formation and make me cower in a dark corner to pray for my sins. I never had a very strong will to live; it would have been just as easy for me to die in some accident as to go on living. When I was about nine years old, I contracted whooping cough. I suffered for only a week before I died. In that time, Ethel Grace betrayed me by telling Frank

something we had done. I never forgave her for her treachery. All the while I was sick in bed, Ethel Grace would come to visit with me and I would refuse to speak to her. Recently, I have come to understand why she betrayed me; Frank had already found out that we had committed some violation of his rules and he tortured her to get the truth. She held out for ten minutes before she said anything. She was only six years old. Soon after I died, Ethel Grace developed whooping cough as well. She lingered for three weeks, dying with the sadness brought on by the fact that I died refusing to make amends. Now, in 2007, I know what I have to do. In order for the strange feelings of company in an empty room to go away, I must get in touch with these two people that I once knew and forgive them.

I sit in my bedroom, candles lit, mind blank, trying to talk to those from the other side. Suddenly, the blackness in my mind transforms into a face, a little girl with blonde hair, in braided pigtails, with a sadness about her that makes my eyes well up with tears. I can feel her pain. I know she is speaking to me but I can't hear the words, I can only feel them. Ethel Grace is so sad, so sorry for what she did to me then. She died with such sorrow that she took that sadness with her to the other side of this world.

Don't worry, I say, I forgive you. I know what Frank did. I am so sorry for holding a grudge. She seems happy, I hug her in my mind's eye, help her get over a century old quarrel that was nothing more than a misunderstanding.

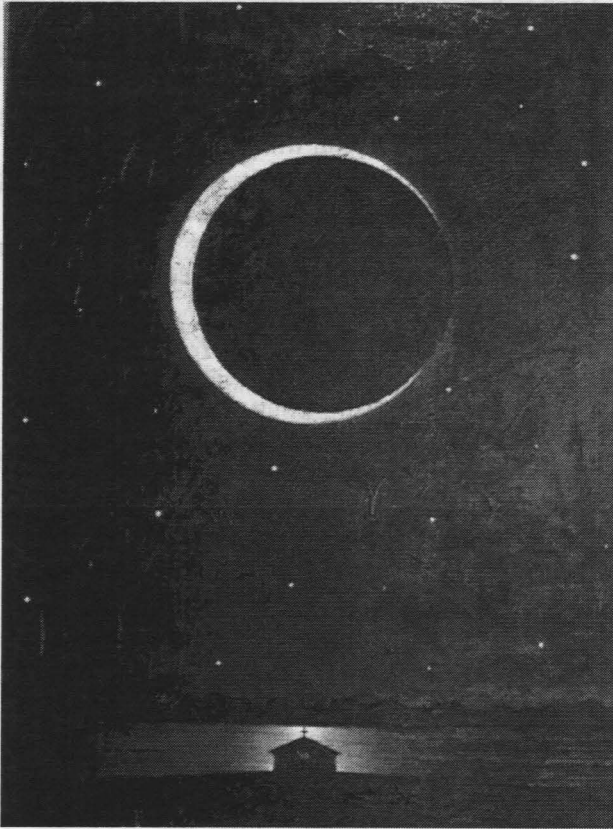
Frank, I call to him, Frank I know you're here. There he is. I can see he is hovering in the corner, glowering at me. He still thinks I am a corrupt soul, deserving of whatever punishment he feels necessary to wash away my sins. Frank, I say, I know you mean well. You only want to assure my place in heaven. Understand, Frank, that I have that place already; I don't need your help. I am sorry for the way life treated you, and I am sorry for the way you still exist, constantly miserable, constantly angry. I want you to know I forgive you, and I don't need you anymore, I can handle it now. I send him love and compassion until I cannot feel his presence anymore. Now, whenever I am alone, I am truly alone. Except for when Ethel Grace comes to visit, I think she misses me.

Shadow of Peace

By: Corey Tarreto

Based on John Robinette's painting

River Church, Crescent Moon



Robinette, John. *River Church, Crescent Moon*. Taylor Arts. "John Robinette."

14 April 2008. < <http://www.taylorarts.com/artist/robinette.html> >

Did the peacemakers
of the past

look up and know

that was us?

Did they know that

every night (since

it was separated from day)

we've been coming together

to mold the moon?

Did they find hope in that

dark circle shadow

of commonality?

In our coming together

ever creature and creed,

every race and religion?

Standing steady with

the burning sun at our backs

so that such a peace portrait

could be taken as they watched

this negative of our group-shot

develop in the easy

chemicals of the night sky?

Did they treasure
our one collective act
and the unexpected beauty
of a shining sliver
and gape in awe
as the Creator
praised our joining
by granting a
hovering halo to
our shadow?
As if to say
"This, this is
your purpose."

Stars

By: Danielle Muller

The little boy sat silently, his grey-green eyes mere puddles of darkness as he gazed up into the midnight sky. The breeze was cool against his cheek, the short grass icy-wet prickles against the soft palm of his hands, as a million starry eyes gazed back down at him. He could distantly hear his mother and father shouting at each other, their words mere splatters of inconvenient noise against his ear. He stirred, refocusing in an attempt to shut out their screams.

"I see you!" He whispered into the night sky.

"We are watching over you."

He smiled to himself as the beauty of their silvery tones reached his consciousness.

"I am safe."

Did they treat you
Stars
the following and two
By Danielle Miller
visited history and the line

The little boy sat silently, his grey-green eyes mere
puddles of darkness as he gazed up into the midnight sky. The
breeze was cool against his cheek, the night air icy-wet
prickles against the soft palm of his hand as a million starry
eyes gazed back down at him. He could distinctly hear his mother
and father shouting at each other, their words were splatters of
inconvenient noise against his ear. He sat there, refusing in an
attempt to shut out their screams, while his two
eyes to it as
"I see you!" He whispered into the night sky
in that way
"We are watching over you" saying
he zoned to himself as the beauty of their silvery tones reached
his consciousness

"I am safe."

